



*I will come to you out of the darkness;  
out of the deeps of sorrow and despair,  
when you are lost and frightened and alone.  
Then I will run my fingers through your hair  
and dry away your tears with my caress.  
And I will give you what you've never known;  
a heart that cares when every heart is stone.*



## *A Whisper from the Deep*

*Steve J Waterfield*



# *A Whisper from the Deeps*

*Written by Steve J Waterfield*

*Front jacket photograph: Pacific sunset near Hawaii*  
*Back jacket photograph: Tyrrhenian sunset near Capri*  
*photographs by Steve J Waterfield*  
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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY FATHER.  
WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILED ME, HE DID NOT



## Contents

Introduction.....	5
<b>CRAVING .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BRIEF ENCOUNTER .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ICE MAIDEN .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>LYRICAL INVENTION.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SEDUCTION .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GIGOLO .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>RENDEZVOUS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>POLES APART .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LOVE DID NOT FIND ME.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>A SONG OF SUMMER .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PSYCHOPHILIA.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>YOUNG SUMMER SLUMBER.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>FIDELITAS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SWEET NOTHINGS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>LOVE’S SECRET .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>FEMME FATALE.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SHADES OF DOUBT .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>UNFORGIVEN .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>THE PARTING .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>DENOUEMENT .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>DEMONS OF THE HEART .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>BELOVED.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>THE CALL .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>THE SPIRIT.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>EMBERS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>DAYS OF GRACE .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>THE LAST WORD.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>FLOWERS BY THE ROAD .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>FOREVER FOUND.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>111 .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>TO JOHN.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>FORTY-SOMETHING .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>BITTER HARVEST .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>TORMENT .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>DON’T ASK.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>SOLILOQUY .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>SLEEP.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>WIDOWER .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>THE SANDS OF TIME .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>SOARING.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>THE EBB TIDE .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>PAST PERFECT .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>FEAR NOT .....</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>THE LAST SUMMER.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>IF SOMETIME .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>TITANIC.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>THE HUGUENOT .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>THE RAVEN.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>THE WAR HORN.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>THE MIRROR .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>THE TWILIGHT OF THE ELVES.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>ARRESTED .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>PREDATOR.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>DERELICTION .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>HAUNTED .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>BRIGHT STAR.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>HEN-PECKED.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>THE DIVORCEE’S LAMENT.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>THE FIRST DAY .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>LIFE’S A BITCH .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>THE ESSEX MAN.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>DIVINE COMEDY.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>SKIVING.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>My Poetry In Other Publications .....</b>	<b>74</b>

## *Introduction*

Having reached a certain stage in my life where I do not intend to continue to write poetry I thought it timely to bring the best of my poems together into a single book. Versions of most of these have been published elsewhere in various publications. Where those poems appear in this book I have in many cases amended, and I hope, improved them.

Other poems of mine not included in this book, have been published elsewhere, although with the wisdom of hindsight I wish that those ones never were! This book contains only those poems which I still feel are worth sharing.

Largely my poetry deals with what I consider to be the greatest themes of life: love, loss and death. Then there are some narrative poems, a mixture of other favourites and lastly some humour. My poetry is unashamedly traditional. I believe in the discipline required by formal structure. When added to emotional depth, beauty of language and insight into the human condition there is nothing more powerful. These are my aims and the criteria I would wish to be judged by. Largely the poems are unspecific to time or place so that anyone at any time in history and in any society might relate to them.

Very few of these poems are autobiographical. Rather, they are what I have observed or imagined to be a part of other peoples experiences. In writing them I hope to have given expression to these feelings so that others can relate to them and derive comfort or pleasure from them.

It is my fondest wish that long after I am gone those who know me will remember me by these poems, and that through time I will somehow touch the hearts of others.

Steve J Waterfield

## *CRAVING*

The angels weep. But never do you hear  
their tears cascade. Like radiant drops of fire,  
that light upon a dark and silent mere,  
they touch your icy deeps and so expire.

Yet still they shed their bitter drops for me;  
as rivers, are their plaintiff drops of woe.  
Mourning the joy that was not meant to be;  
for you have deemed that it shall not be so.

But gentle to a soul bereft of bliss,  
They grant to me the recompense of dreams;  
where you repay my longing with your kiss  
and all my pain your tender touch redeems.

Deny me then; but still my heart endures;  
and all my dreams forever shall be yours.

***BRIEF ENCOUNTER***

The final dance.  
A hopeful smile.  
A furtive glance;  
two hearts stand still.

An endless pause.  
A shy response.  
An empty floor.  
A lost romance.



## *ICE MAIDEN*

Let me linger in the sorrow of your eyes  
and I will wander in their loneliness;  
through boundless deeps adorned with moonlit skies  
where solitude has made its saddest shrine.  
There, in the inner sanctum of your lies  
I'll read the tender truth you must confess,  
though all your soft illusions would disguise.  
Then surely you will own that you are mine.

Don't fight it! Nor let scornful words confound  
the dreams so gently veiled by your reproach.  
For when our hot, enraptured lips are bound  
and sealed with burning kisses, love must be.  
Your barbs of ice will melt before my touch  
and you will yield, and give yourself to me.

### *LYRICAL INVENTION*

With futile arts and empty words I vent  
the dull reverberations of my soul.  
My pen strays from its proper element;  
the eloquence that ever is my goal.

I stumble from cliché to hackneyed rhyme  
with sentiments so often aired before;  
I fail to subjugate the wayward line,  
and hammer vainly at the Muses door.

But when you fill the compass of my gaze  
and with your soft inflections charm my ear,  
then lyrical invention wings its way  
to lead me from my dim and vacant sphere.

Inspire then love, such syllables divine  
that they may win your heart and make it mine.

## *SEDUCTION*

Steal softly to my arms by dead of night  
and in the burning tumult of my bed  
I'll feed upon your flesh. Deny me not  
your voluptuousness. Will you forbid  
me now and linger endlessly in doubt,  
rueful of the chances never taken?  
Then do not let morality indict  
that fire in your eyes, whose sparks betoken  
far purer desires than frail nuptial vows.  
Your secret dreams of unbridled passion  
refute such words. So give no voice  
to doubts, but through your hungry lips consign  
your soul to me. Then in my wild embrace,  
you'll taste the joys of dark, forbidden bliss.

## *GIGOLO*

The tender play of words  
and hush of heaving sighs.  
The resonance of eyes,  
that flash like dancing swords  
in smiles, that gently mock.  
A tendered fingertip.  
Then lock entangles lock  
and lip devours lip.

The key turns in the door  
whilst drum the beating hearts  
on bed, on floor. He parts;  
she draws. Hands rend and claw....  
At last now spent, she sleeps.  
But now she dreams alone  
and wakes from raptured deeps.  
to find that he is gone.

## *RENDEZVOUS*

The music echoes softly through the wine.  
Each scans the other, searching for a sign  
and for long uncertain moments their eyes  
meet. A fever of hopes and possibilities  
is tendered by each glance. Her ample gaze  
draws him to its deeps. His reason fades  
besotted by the vast, primeval rush  
that surges through his veins. And then a hush  
as something so much more than words is said;  
though tongues are mute and empty speech has fled  
from lips drawn wide. The pulse of time is stilled  
as the last lingering moment filled  
with dread, with joy, with desperate chance slips past.  
He lifts his hand to touch; and then at last  
they close, each plunging into the vast abyss  
of aching need that craves each thrust, each kiss.  
And nothing now exists but the universe  
of eyes of lips, of hair; and the perverse  
ecstatic thrill of limb entwined with limb.  
From height to topless height they climb  
to touch the peaks of heaven with their cries.  
At last he groans; she yields ecstatic sighs.  
He withers, sprawling over her lank form;  
now cast ashore, when love has spent its storm.  
She fumbles, groping vaguely for the light  
but founders. For the tender folds of night  
have wrapped them round and born them on dark wings  
to where the dawn breaks and where the lark sings.



*POLES APART*

You stir not to the rapture of my strings,  
nor dwell spellbound on what enchants my sight.  
The blissful word that lends my spirit wings,  
leaves you unmoved, or wins your playful slight.

But when your circle's little twists of fate  
wring out your tears, my eyes remain unproved.  
And when life's petty doings you relate,  
my distant stare betrays a mind removed.

Truly our stars ascend in different spheres,  
to rise and rest at distant poles apart.  
Then, love what is this magic that endears  
and subjugates the nature to the heart?

Who knows? But may its mysteries endure  
to sow this sweet confusion evermore.

*LOVE DID NOT FIND ME*

Love did not find me under moonlit skies,  
adorned with silver stars and crystal sprays;  
nor on the airy strains of symphonies,  
nor in the heady heat of summer days.

It came upon me softly, through a pall  
of broken dreams; when I had had my fill  
of love and lies. Determined not to fall  
I let it lie, though it would find me still.

But now I see through time's slow clarity;  
those agonies were but the overtures  
in love's great symphony. And self pity  
is not justified when fonder love endures.

Such flames were but the fire that purifies;  
brief tokens of the flame that never dies.

*A SONG OF SUMMER*

Clouds slumber in the cradle of the skies.  
The golden corn churns gently to and fro.  
He tells to her his sweet, seductive lies;  
she whispers something only they must know.

Laughter, then the uncertain play of eyes,  
a touch, a kiss and then a clasp undone.  
The grasses heave again to blissful sighs,  
as Earth and sky are melded into one.

*PSYCHOPHILIA*

I will come to you out of the darkness;  
out of the deeps of sorrow and despair,  
when you are lost and frightened and alone.  
Then I will run my fingers through your hair  
and dry away your tears with my caress.  
And I will give you what you've never known;  
a heart that cares when every heart is stone.

## *YOUNG SUMMER SLUMBER*

He dreams hammock hung, slung deep in tumbled, dappled shade,  
where shadows weave their webs through the braided, sunlit sparks.  
Birds twitter; and the chirruping of their serenade  
mingles with the jangled church bells' song. A lone dog barks.

And all around: the endless hum and throb of wings, where  
summer's humble denizens, now dart and flit beyond;  
rifling, through the lush, brash sprays of shoots fresh sprung to air,  
or grazing dazed over the drowsy haze of the pond.

The sharp rap of a bat as a ball is struck... Howzat!  
The muffled murmur of the throng moves to a slack clap.  
But he does not wish to stir beneath his tilted hat;  
Absently he turns; now nestling deep into his wrap.

Breeze born, the tang of a new shorn lawn pervades the air.  
Bliss! The seductive hiss and pop of an ice cool beer  
and the sensuous, silk stroke of soft hands in his hair,  
as smiling lips, love lost, in a sunlit face draw near.

The sun, slow sinking, slips through sable branches burning;  
their hands locked in a love knot; their eyes homewards turning.



## *FIDELITAS*

When saddened by the loss of those I knew;  
the faithless lovers of my distant past  
and friends who passed me by for friends anew  
or drifted and were strangers at the last;  
I cling to thoughts of you. For you would stand  
by me through fear and fire against the world;  
my rock amidst Life's ever shifting sand  
and every hurt that destiny has hurled.  
All this you do for love and love alone.  
But how should I rightly pay you for your pain?  
I'll share your dreams and make them all my own  
or dry your tears and make you smile again.  
Thus through the tears and dreams we have to come,  
your heart in mine shall ever find a home.

*For Jacqueline*

*SWEET NOTHINGS*

Speak no soft words to me. For I shall trust;  
and then with more sweet words reciprocate,  
though softer still. But love turns into hate  
and feelings now sublime may turn to dust.

So make no vows the way that lovers do;  
all bonds must break; and nothing can endure  
the slights of time. And dreams lose their allure  
as fading love succumbs to love anew.

Someday we'll part and end all this pretence;  
and everything we ever said will seem  
like so much wasted breath; a foolish dream  
to which we clung against our better sense.

Then we'll regret the joys we cast behind  
for empty whispers, lost upon the wind.

*LOVE'S SECRET*

How can ever I tell you how I feel,  
when I can never give you what you need?  
I'd give my all for you, but won't defile  
your love with lost vows and promises denied.

I cannot breach the bonds of faith that life  
has set me in; the trust I'll not betray;  
the hearts I would not break. Nor can I love,  
and have no thought of what I might destroy.

So I must set my fondest hopes aside,  
except to hope you finds your dream at last;  
beyond regret for all we've left unsaid,  
and everything we almost had, but lost.

Then none but I will mourn for lips unknissed,  
and count with silent tears the bitter cost.

*FEMME FATALE*

How can I deny you? I am struck dumb,  
before your dreamy face and looks that kill.  
Like every time before, I must succumb  
to all your charms and gladly do your will.

I linger at the bottom of your list,  
a poor second; the least of all your toys.  
It's hard to bear –yet still I can't resist.  
But what else can I do? I have no choice.

So I must wait for you, half believing  
the honeyed words you pour into my ear,  
hanging on false hopes, living and breathing  
your promises; so sweet but insincere.

Thus I must love; and live this desperate lie,  
for one who does not know or cares not why.

## *SHADES OF DOUBT*

My love, O my love are you softly sleeping?  
Sleep softly then in dreams that never end;  
for you are always safe within my keeping.  
But though I try, I cannot comprehend  
what secret bliss enchants your golden slumber.  
Maybe you smile because you think of me.  
Or is there another? Sometimes I wonder.  
And the siren whisper of jealousy  
that twists your innocence into deceiving,  
echoes from the malignant depths of shade,  
to tell me I'm a fool for my believing,  
and that your shows of love are falsely made.

Is there some strange prophesy in suspicion?  
Do the dark forces of the mind make clear  
what eyes bewitched with love's rose-coloured vision  
feign not to see; most blind to that most dear?  
It may be so. But doubt is just a liar;  
it is a poison, prying thief whose creed  
despoils the very object of desire;  
stealing by fear what love would not concede.  
No, I will trust blindly to your love; never  
tainting its purity; chancing my all.  
Then you must love me faithfully forever,  
or hang my heart, a trophy, on your wall.



## *UNFORGIVEN*

The door hung wide. And the stairs clattered  
loud with diminishing footsteps pounding,  
resounding throughout the walls of the hall.  
By the threshold, the flowers lay scattered.  
Amidst their battered petals he found the ring,  
lying, tear-glazed there where she let it fall.

As he stooped to touch the treasured token,  
his cheeks flushed red with burning blood  
and his lips' slight quiver told all his pain.  
Might she still forgive the words he'd spoken?  
Never. He knew that she was gone for good,  
so sighing, turned and closed the door again.

## *THE PARTING*

She looked at me. And the sorrow in her face  
said all that could be said of her regret.  
She tried to tell me it had not been planned -  
it just happened. But now her course was set.  
Perhaps some other time, some other place...  
She must have known I'd never understand.  
And the words still faltered on her lips  
as they perished in the silence of my ears,  
whilst I too proud to beg, too hurt to cry  
gave light consent. Time soon enough for tears.  
And so she smiled and touched my fingertips,  
then took my life and softly passed me by.

## *DENOUEMENT*

The tumbled portrait  
lay beneath the empty glass  
and the chocolate,  
as her favourite love story  
flickered to its tragic close.

*DEMONS OF THE HEART*

By some mischance their paths have crossed  
and as they glance, the veil of time  
is drawn. Once more his heart is lost  
in ancient agonies sublime.

The years hang lightly on her face;  
the radiant lustre of her hair  
in golden lines and silver trace  
adorns her beauty as before.

And he recalls each golden tress;  
the dark enchantment of her eyes.  
Each token of her loveliness  
still burned in golden memories.

Yet she surveys with vacancy  
the man whose vows she sometime heard  
But he would ever rue the day  
she crushed his dreams with one brief word.

And summoned by her guileless charm  
the dormant pangs of hurts untold  
awake to break time's gentle balm  
and open wide his wounds of old.

Like hounds that stalk the hunted hart,  
his darkest demons rise in rage,  
to rend his bleeding soul apart;  
their former malice unassuaged.

Such was the magic in her lips.  
But heedless of the hurt she's done,  
unmindful of his life's eclipse  
she smiles and passes and is gone.

*BELOVED*

If only I could hold you once again,  
I would cradle you so close, so tenderly  
within my arms. And as I wrapped you warm  
in my embrace, our sweet, enraptured storm  
of tears would run in streams of ecstasy;  
to wash away the anger and the pain.

If only you would tell me you forgive;  
and that you'll always love me just the same,  
I would lift my fallen spirit from the dust;  
and everything between us would be just  
as it used to be before the sadness came;  
when life was love and love was still alive.

*THE CALL*

Windward I thrust  
the precious dust;  
the scant remains  
that bear your name.

Much sweeter there,  
in rushing airs  
and lofty plains  
than dark domains.

But now you sigh  
when winds are high,  
you sigh for me  
relentlessly.

So I must go  
where high winds blow;  
where soaring free  
you wait for me.

### *THE SPIRIT*

No longer do you cross the distant hill  
nor pass the gate, nor rock the empty chair.  
No longer does your laughter fill the hall  
or your song that used to echo cheer.

But when the firelight flickers in the hearth  
and the wind whispers through the aching air,  
I hear the restless voices of the Earth.  
I hear you then; and know that you are here.

## *EMBERS*

When evening embers spark and burn, she plays.  
And her face is cast in hues of jet and fire,  
as her eyes drift in their enchanted haze  
through mysteries of lyric and of lyre.

Then the strings tremble beneath her caress  
like lovers in a tumult of desire;  
winging from the voids of nothingness  
an air to grace the solitude of night  
and raise the mortal soul to raptured bliss.

There, by the play of shadow and of light  
sweet figurings of memory are drawn.  
With rueful joy we wonder at the sight.  
But then we weep that love still lingers on  
in music, when the things we love are gone.



*DAYS OF GRACE*

I laid the flowers softly on your grave  
and turned my face to watch the winter sky.  
Reflections of the times we used to have  
and how things were for us in days gone by  
sped swiftly past. And soon there was but one;  
when you so gaunt and frail, looked up and smiled.  
Then you whispered 'you are a good boy son.'  
And I, a full-grown man, wept like a child.

*For Mother*

### *THE LAST WORD*

I never got to say farewell.  
You passed without a final word.  
I knew the truth but dared not tell;  
you knew as much but still preferred  
to feign false hopes and empty cheer  
as if the end was never near.

But how I wish I now could say  
the tender words that I repressed  
before the night bore you away  
to join the legions of the blessed.

And if from some ethereal part  
you may yet seek for words untold,  
look deep and find within my heart  
in letters carved in burning gold,  
the words that say 'I love you still'  
'I always did. I always will'.

*FLOWERS BY THE ROAD*

They once stood proud in light of day.  
But here they shed  
their shades of red  
to cast a shroud upon the way.

Though lost, they rise once more  
with brighter leaf.  
As hearts that grief  
has rent again shall soar.

## *FOREVER FOUND*

His voice that sang is now forever still.  
Nor shall his laughter echo as before;  
as in the days when we would laugh our fill;  
as in the golden days that are no more.

He loved but once; loved only once but well.  
She was his ecstasy, his joy, his all;  
bearing a love that only death could quell.  
But what death takes, in time it must recall.

Nurtured by love, but shorn of love to fade,  
with nothing but to falter and to fall  
he languished in the realms of deepening shade,  
still waiting for her long remembered call.

But now until the wheel of time has turned  
their dust shall mingle in the lap of earth;  
heart bound to heart and love to love returned;  
her wisdom to his melodies and mirth.

Their spirits that could only thrive as one  
will share a last embrace in hallowed ground.  
And so at last they will not be alone  
and what was lost, shall be forever found.

*For Thomas*

Sleep softly now. For blessed dreams may come;  
the weary bonds of life have slipped away;  
and you shall be as one returning home  
to peace and rest beyond the world's decay.

Time's rigour renders all to ash and dust,  
all names to letters carved in burnished stone;  
and all our works are doomed to wilt or rust.  
But love can never fade nor be undone.

And through that love your spirit shall not die,  
cherished in thoughts that burn forever bright,  
in visions framed within a wistful eye  
and dreams that grace the sanctity of Night.

Then never fear; though Death's white wings must soar,  
they bear you to those dreams forevermore.

*For Dorothy*

*To JOHN*

Goodbye my friend. We shall not meet again.  
Nor shall you cast your shadow on the earth,  
nor feel the radiant sun, the touch of rain  
upon your cheek, or the wind's gentle breath.

Now little things bring back old memories  
to make me smile and weep and smile once more.  
They whisper of forsaken destinies  
and tell of dreams my tears cannot restore.

I miss the endless hours that we'd spend,  
your laughter and the games we used to play.  
Now fond remembrance is my only friend  
and all my hues are lost in shades of grey.

Rest easy now. Cast all your cares behind  
and rise once more to race upon the wind.

*For John*

### *FORTY-SOMETHING*

Soon, fifty years for me. And I must shed  
the tattered rags of youth and face what fate  
has left in store. Time's alchemy makes lead  
from what was gold. And now I hesitate,  
humbled by the thought of what draws close.  
Death follows, pace for pace not far behind,  
yet patient in the chase he cannot lose;  
whilst I must seek the peace I cannot find-  
lost, with the immortality of youth;  
for young eyes never see Life's cruel jest.  
But years and wit reveal the bitter truth;  
that false must be our dreams and brief our rest.  
And what time gives it surely must redeem;  
waking us to night from day's bright dream.

### *BITTER HARVEST*

Old wounds are deep. Night's spectres wax and wane  
then wax once more before my sleepless eyes.  
Its shades once thrust from memory, rise again;  
night's dungeon walls resound with fevered cries;  
with baleful whisperings and fierce demands....  
I watch and wait and listen in the dark.  
The clock stirs at last. Its reluctant hands  
now shiver, sweep and falter to the mark.  
Another instant dies as it began;  
bearing to the end its bitter load.  
Yet pain is not so brief. Each moment's span  
but reaps again what each before has sowed;  
the fruits of anguish in a tortured mind  
that sees no peace ahead, no joy behind.



## *TORMENT*

Amidst the teeming torments of the night,  
my soul from sleep my fevered thought divides;  
and anguish casts its veil upon my sight,  
to summon spectral cares before my eyes.

My conscience reels and flits from side to side.  
I vacillate, no final judgement making,  
as countless wrongs and countless rights arise;  
my will now firm; my will now hesitating.

Then wisdom speaks, but fearful of its sway,  
which counsels acts of dire consequence,  
I fly again to anguish and to fret.  
And weakness melts my nobler thoughts away.  
Thus Passion conquers Reason's better sense  
and hearts must rule, though minds may still regret.

*DON'T ASK*

You ask me why I seem so sad, my friend?  
Then would you share this rack of self-reproach  
and nagging doubt, and the nameless, unframed  
yearning that lustres just beyond my reach?

Then dwell upon the higher destiny  
that Chance ordained was never to be mine;  
the greater man I never dared to be;  
the golden days whose waste I now bemoan.

And weep to hear the chances I set by,  
when chastened by the prospect of despair,  
and aspirations never meant to be,  
I let my caution subjugate desire.

Don't ask. For it is more than may be borne  
to know, when all is lost, what might have been.

### *SOLILOQUY*

What wry contingency of fate is this,  
that we call Life? This bitter irony:  
briefer than a sigh, yet sweeter than a kiss.  
This almost bliss. This fitful agony.  
For we whose dust was forged in ancient skies,  
ascending through the laws of chance unshod,  
to contemplate our own infinities  
and speculate upon the mind of God,  
feel that there must be more for us than death  
past this precarious futility.  
But no. We falter in a fleeting breath;  
with dreams unspent, joys never meant to be.  
And all our wisdom yields a single proof:  
that we must die; that death is life's great truth.

## *SLEEP*

Come sleep, cloak me in your veils of jet,  
and bear me down your softly flowing streams  
where I'll forsake all sorrow and regret  
for black oblivion or blessed dreams.

Come swiftly then, but slowly take your leave.  
Nay, stay with me forever if you may.  
Though I fear the shapeless silence that you weave,  
your mysteries defy the glance of day.

For dawn shall bring new torments and new tears,  
the aspirations lost, the hopes undone;  
or in their place, the insubstantial fears  
whose shadows swell before the rising sun.

So, let me look upon your shrouded face  
and drink my fill of darkness in your eyes,  
then in the velvet coils of your embrace  
I'll drift in dreams and long nocturnal sighs.

## *WIDOWER*

With leaden stride he enters in his halls  
and hears the heedless stirrings of the cat,  
the hollow echo of his slow footfalls  
and the bickering budgie's fitful chat.

Littering the mat, lie scattered letters;  
not greetings from some dear and distant one,  
but anonymous commercial matters,  
or missives to some tenant long since gone.

The heavy silence of the empty street,  
fills chastened rooms that want their mistress' care.  
And the dripping tap's perpetual beat  
pats passing time on pots and plates piled there.

Not the aroma of some homely fare,  
Or the grate, grinning in its homely hue.  
Only the faint, stale savour of the air  
pervades the chill no furnace could subdue.

So, brooding in his long accustomed place,  
he dwells upon each still and empty chair  
as dark deliberations fill each space  
with spectres; of the friends that once were there.

And when the lone, eternal day is done,  
long eve and even longer night must close.  
Then in his bed half-burdened now by one,  
in dreams unblessed: his restless soul's repose.

## *THE SANDS OF TIME*

The tide's slick tongues lick and lap the sleeping shore  
in waves that swell, then slowly shrink in drunken fans  
into the thirsty banks. They sink and are no more.  
Like the sighing of the sea's soul they thrash and thrust,  
stirring from black oblivion the dormant dust  
to a brief whirl of life in the vast, vacant spans.

Amidst the chatter and the groan of shattered stone,  
sands seethe in tumbling turmoil down the strand,  
aroused by the shrouded power that draws them on.  
They rise and rest, with each surging wave's caress,  
until all is stilled by the turning tide's redress.  
Like us, their quickened dust is doomed by time's dark hand.

## *SOARING*

I stared at the bird as it soared all alone,  
from my perch on a ledge that hung over the sea,  
as the rush of the spray washed the ramparts of stone,  
and the rocks bore the lash with a gasp and a groan.

And the gull rose and fell with the swell of the blast,  
as it hung in a swoon in the gust or the lee.  
Then it gave out a howl like a soul that is cursed,  
or a spirit that wails for the hope that has passed.

Yet my heart was enriched at the pitch of its cry.  
Like the call of forever it fell unto me.  
But it span in the gaze of the sun's fading eye,  
and rolled like a tear down the face of the sky.

As the sun spilled its blood at the brink of the day  
air, fire and water made bright alchemy.  
Then a cloud crossed its beams like a banner of grey  
then it fused with the ocean and melted away.

As the last flecks of light tripped the crests of the tide  
And the gull's parting cry hushed the sigh of the sea.  
Then the wonder in me laid my heart open wide  
And bade me depart from the darkness inside.

### *THE EBB TIDE*

I now abide the dark, forbidding tide  
that ebbs but once and rises never more.  
On silent breakers softly I shall glide,  
where sable skies frown over nameless shores.

But never ask me where I shall abide,  
or whether I shall see you once again.  
Forever calls and will not be denied,  
though hope may thrive where comprehension ends.

Weep not. But let me linger in your eyes;  
those blessed pools that are my only shrine;  
For in your gaze my spirit shall arise,  
or fade from thence should memory decline.

Remember then. Your introspections paid,  
through dark dimensions touch my shrouded shade.



*PAST PERFECT*

Farewell my love. We shall not meet again.  
You know as well as I that cannot be;  
not though a thousand centuries pass by,  
and all that we have known is lost and gone.

Don't ask me why. I know it isn't fair;  
it is a thing too vast to comprehend,  
that we must leave the things we love behind,  
and wander into darkness and to fear.

But I will slip into eternal shade,  
undaunted by the brooding emptiness  
that waits beyond. I have had my dues;  
for nothing can destroy the times we shared.  
So all the joys that destiny denies  
are captured in a dream that never dies.

*FEAR NOT*

Fear not the menacing whispers of night,  
nor the path where the shadows are yawning.  
Nor the bolts that the storm lashes down in its spite,  
nor the doom of your darkest day's dawning,

For now I must rest on the crest of a star,  
and must wander the ways of the wind.  
But I'll be with you still wheresoever you are,  
in your hand, in your heart, in your mind.

## *THE LAST SUMMER*

Under the drowsy willow tree he lies.  
The demon sun beats down in burning rays.  
The restless grasses softly fall and rise  
as the wind like a creeping spirit, strays  
across the lawn. Sleep closes up his eyes  
and he glides into dreams of his lost, golden days.

The open book slides slowly from his grasp,  
dropping to stir the pretty butterfly  
from its gentle rest. But the busy wasp  
still unamazed spins haphazardly by.  
Nothing exists, but the hoarse creek and rasp  
of the wind-teased branch. Nothing but the sky.

So, drifting in a nether world of rest,  
he wanders in young manhood's sweet domain,  
where every hope and every heart is blessed  
and rosy hues bemuse the shades of pain.  
And with the heavy heaving of his breast  
his visions rise, take shape and fade again.

He sees a child perched on his father's knee,  
bouncing joyfully, then lifted to air  
and whirled round and round, swirling dizzily  
amidst the mingled peels of shrill laughter.  
He sees a boy carving names upon a tree,  
his first kiss and the second, still softer.

On shoulders raised, he holds the trophy high,  
the captain and the hero of the team.  
And noting the lustre in his mother's eye  
he, decked in scholars' robes fulfils her dream,  
as he ascends the college panoply,  
to take his honours from the waiting Dean.

He hears the singing bells. His lovely bride  
beams at him down the aisles of sculpted stone.  
She takes his ring. The chapel doors hang wide.  
And soon, her pangs of childbirth. With a groan  
their first is born. And they with tears undried  
embrace with ecstasy the child, their own.

He throws a stick into the air calling  
to his beloved hound to fetch and send.  
And his young son flies close behind falling  
in a mirthful heap amidst his faithful friend  
and soon the devoted three are rolling  
in a trinity of joy without end.

And now, a lone cloud strays across the sun.  
The sparks of light and shade are veiled in gloom  
beneath his restful tree. His dreams are done.  
Stirring, he wakes to see the afternoon  
advance to eve. Like him, its span is spun.  
Life is so sweet. Why must it end so soon?

*IF SOMETIME*

If sometime in your thoughts you seek for me,  
look where the golden sunlight breaks the dawn;  
or the summer breeze now wandering free  
runs lazy fingers through the ripened corn.

Remember a rainbow in a brooding sky,  
or gaze upon the blossom's early bloom.  
Or watch the lone star standing brave and high  
or the glow of embers in a darkened room.

Then speak to me, as to the vacant air  
and somewhere in your heart I shall reply.  
For all my thoughts were ever for your care  
and all my dreams; the dreams that never die.

And so a trace of me shall linger on  
and be with you forever when I'm gone.

## *TITANIC*

The stars shone cold. And I gazed spellbound,  
back across the ocean's dark, silken plain,  
that lay drowsed, subdued by ice, to silence.  
No clouds veiled the sky. Nor wind, nor sound  
of Nature's voice masked the cries of pain  
and terror fading, dying in the distance.

'We must go back!, go back and help!' I said.  
But then the ship thrust its colossal tail  
a hundred feet into the air, to wheel  
like Poseidon rearing his wrathful head  
out of the deeps, drowning our little wail  
with his thunder- the drum of shearing steel.

Our blood ran colder than the ocean's heart  
and we wavered, aghast before the doomed;  
riven between humanity and fear.  
But from life to death, taking now our part,  
we faced the proud, majestic stern that loomed  
above us- a monument to despair.

We faltered forwards as the stern reared high,  
slithered and slunk into the hungry deeps.  
The lights trembled and then they burned no more.  
Only the moon, amidst a crystal sky  
lit our way, like Death's pale lantern that keeps  
its flame forever on a distant shore.

And so we stole on, through the emptiness,  
slipping through the dim, solitudes of space.  
Through the silent void our calls resonate,  
unanswered still; except for the grim press  
like spectres, drifting past- with upturned face,  
and the white eyes glaring as if in hate.

Time shall not fade the horror of that night;  
the eyes frozen in harsh reproach,  
the unmouthed words of bitterness frost glazed  
on chill lips; dead faces, cast in fetid light,  
thronging ever nearer around the boat.  
And from the deeps, accusing fingers raised.

Such was the downfall of outrageous pride;  
we styled ourselves the masters of the main;  
the air, the earth, the ocean were our slaves.  
But in a stroke, the Ocean justified  
his claim with guiltless blood. But one domain  
he ceded there: the dark, eternal graves.

## *THE HUGUENOT*

It was the height of summer and in the garden where they met  
all the flowers were in bloom. Only the lily and the rose  
had dropped their untimely petals to the ground. Crushed, fallen, yet  
still they adorned the earth with their bright colours. Their shattered rows  
defying still the storm's ferocious lash, which the night had set  
to daunt the trembling leaf. Standing true, they fell beneath its blows.

She did not speak, but she leapt into his arms and held him near,  
as one who binds to their breast the dearest object of their heart,  
lest it pass away. Upon his purple clothes she shed a tear,  
then looked imploringly into his face. But when her tears passed,  
he gently dried her eyes, until they closed as though in prayer.  
She kissed his cheek, then softly, she prized his tender arms apart.

She gazed into his eyes again and round his arm she wound  
a white bandana. A tyrant had decreed the one true faith  
and by this token the righteous would be known. To be found  
on the morrow without this false livery, was certain death.  
She bade him wear it for but the single day, to thus confound  
his foes and by this small sacrilege, evade their waking wrath.

Gravely, he shook his head and unbinding the knot that she'd tied,  
placed the last red rose in her hair and a lily, white as snow.  
She drew him back again. Her apprehensive eyes drawn wide,  
beseeched him in the name of their love to save himself. But no.  
She knew too well the man she loved. His faith could not be denied.  
So, as the breeze mingled the fallen petals, he turned to go.

She followed as he walked away, then faltered in his wake,  
falling to her knees. She called to him again, but his name died  
on her quivering lips. Her eyes dwelled upon the open gate,  
her fingers stretched in entreaty. But only the breeze replied,  
as it swept away the broken flowers, like the hand of fate.  
He was gone. Gone. Her tears spattered the cold stone. And the wind sighed.

## *THE RAVEN*

Nestling deep within its autumn slumber  
the wood lies still, stirring not to the raw,  
crisp rustle of leaves that crackle under  
soft moccasins crossing its golden floor.

Through the wasted web of beams and rafters  
that veil the dusky depths and murky glades,  
the sun thrusts down its bright, translucent shafts  
and lights a blazing mesh of russet blades.

Within the silver rays that slash the shade  
like swords, the restive dust hosts swirl and spin.  
Upon the ground the mist pools form and fade;  
the shapeless spirits of his ancient kin.

But he knows no fear; he is of their own.  
He has but come to walk with them a while.  
For in their world the ways of truth are shown  
to those whose hearts are pure; unstained by guile.

The trees disperse. Now he is almost there.  
He pauses at the brook, whose waters spill,  
trip and tumble in a race to nowhere,  
forever striving, but forever still.

He wonders at the folly of its haste,  
Its futile flight; much like the flight of men,  
not tranquil, like the timeless mountain crest  
or the tree who dies to be born again.

His totem bird, the raven calls him on  
and he feels the power surging through his blood,  
the power of the spirit world beyond,  
whose portal lies within the sacred wood.

The raven calls once more, and up they climb;  
up, the sacred pinnacle of stone,  
to touch the sky and leave the earth behind.  
And there he makes his bed and lays his bones.

His bed is of the jagged rocks and thorns  
that tearing flesh, the bliss of sleep denies.  
He takes no bread; the draft of life he scorns  
And naked in the burning sun he lies.

Three days, three nights he writhes in agony.  
His incantations die upon the winds  
and though his spirit strives, it breaks not free.  
The raven flies, as near the vulture spins.



At last when Death and Life in equal part  
dispute the wasting embers of his soul  
and coils of darkness wind about his heart,  
the heavens gape; he sees their walls unfold.

Then, through the tumbling clouds the sunburst teems.  
The raven comes again and bids him rise.  
He follows over mountains woods and streams,  
to golden plains where summer never dies.

He sees the prairies dark with buffalo,  
the mighty warriors so proud, so brave,  
with feathered crest, with tomahawk and bow  
and deerskin shields with talismans engraved.

In the distance, stand proud the great tepees  
where four abreast men pass the open doors.  
In easy toil, beneath the shady trees  
sit graceful and demure the lovely squaws.

The wolfshead strides upon his milk white mare.  
and with voice that peals like thunder, speaks.  
He plants the sage's feather in his hair  
and daubs the hero's stripe upon his cheeks.

The vision fades into eternity,  
drawn back into the bosom of the sky.  
And he lies sprawling like a fallen tree.  
But still the raven watches from on high.

Now stirring, he eludes Death's icy grasp  
and wakens to the brazen hues of eve,  
as thrice the raven soaring, circles past  
to yield a parting cry and take his leave.

He rouses with the changed unearthly sight  
of one who has seen the eternal plain  
and walked in the blessed vales of twilight.  
His eyes earth bound, shall never see the same.

With face and hands upturned he bids farewell  
to the truer realm that his heart esteems  
and turns his gaze unto the painted hills,  
towards his home, his world of fleeting dreams.

## *THE WAR HORN*

They found him slumped against a tree, his sword still clasped in his hand. He was pale and death was nigh. Black arrows bristled from his breast and close by, dashed on the ground lay his mighty horn, whose trill had been the terror of his foes. His defeat had been dearly bought. The bodies at his feet told the pyrrhic triumph of their victory. But he had erred and all things had gone awry. Now, he too prepared to pay a heavy price and with his final breath he begged forgiveness. His gaze grew distant, his hands turned cold as ice and his frameless spirit passed into the west.

They wound him in his mantle of silver-grey and bore him shoulder high upon his great shield to the margin. In the rushes was concealed the little craft which would carry him away through mountain, field and forest ever onward to the sea. They laid him in the boat, his sword on his breast. His golden belt caught the last glow of evening and the great crag that was his brow was ennobled by the ethereal sheen of torchlight. From helm to prow its bloody stain lusted in the piles of plundered arms that gleamed about him, the martial tribute of the slain.

They thrust the vessel down the bank and it slipped slowly into the river, then gathered pace drawn on by the current. With majestic grace it slid across the crystal waters, but tipped and tottered as it ran upon the torrent of the straights. They hailed him thrice with the ancient paeans of their folk. What bitter drops they shed as they called his name out loud. But on he sped into the jaws of the awaiting narrows. They bade him farewell and good speed to the Halls of Eternal Shadow and thence no one knows. Onwards the vessel blundered, into the falls.

They stood transfixed. For amidst the strident roar and thunder of the waters, the lanterns hissed like shooting stars. Then, engulfed by swirling mists and shadows they faltered and were seen no more. They remained silent. For it seemed they could hear the distant echo, soft and yet proud and clear, of the war horn with its trumpetings of doom. It whispered through the distant plains to the home that he would see no more and all his people paid their toll of tears. Its song was stilled and the cares of mourning lightened in their hearts. For his shade had passed in glory. And vengeance would be theirs.

## *THE MIRROR*

Amidst its tangled arbours overgrown,  
with tainted paint that peeled from rotten wood,  
in sad and fallen splendour all alone,  
the mansion in its brooding silence stood.

And there behind its blackened panes obscure,  
there lived a dame, once famous of the stage,  
whose beauty at its eminence and flower,  
had been the pride and glory of her age.

But now by all the world she was ignored,  
for no one called on her or ventured near.  
Likewise she would not answer to the door  
nor read the letters seldom scattered there.

No mirror flashed her semblance from the wall,  
nor any other bright reflective glass.  
She feared to look upon herself at all  
and thus to own the wasting of her past.

And so she tried to hide the bitter truth  
and dwelt always upon her former face,  
In jaded pictures from her faded youth  
where all her loveliness could still be traced.

Still less would she her withered aspect show,  
for any other eyes to look upon,  
lest through their eyes the mocking world would know  
the sad and faded thing she had become.

She never walked the verdant glades outside,  
nor did she venture thereupon to gaze,  
nor opened up the shrouded casement wide,  
but lived her life through endless, lonely days.

The lantern was her only dawning sun;  
a single candle was her evening star.  
She knew not of the changing season's run,  
nor what the day, nor what the month or year.

But every night alone before her bed,  
she kneeled and prayed that heaven in its grace  
might lay its blessed mercy on her head  
and so restore what time had laid to waste.

So there entombed in her abysmal cell  
she doomed herself to this reclusive state.  
Until one night a mighty tempest fell  
to rip the rotten board and snap the slate.

But still as death she slept till morning came  
when through the shattered rafters gaping wide,  
there fell from heaven's heart a silver beam,  
to cast its gleam upon her dreaming eye.

She stirred to drink the shafts from overhead  
with eyes of waking wonder. Her spirit flew;  
as one revived that rises from the dead  
to look upon the weary world anew.

And there close by, beside her bedside stool,  
the rain had slipped in slow drips overnight,  
to pour into a shining, crystal pool  
the blazing shafts of heaven's purest light.

She gazed, all apprehensions cast aside  
and fell beneath the spell of dancing rays  
that played upon her eyes. She peered inside,  
staring, breathless into its depths amazed.

For there she stared upon her face at last  
And there refracted in its shafts sublime,  
her aspect hung. Still withered by the ages past;  
still tainted by the wracks of time.

But now, she did not start or shy away,  
but found a higher form of beauty there;  
found in the noble dignity of age;  
sculpted in ancient lines, in ashen hair.

She rose once more and with her eyes unveiled,  
thrust wide her doors. Her shutters wide were drawn;  
to breach the gloom that had so long prevailed;  
to wonder at the glory of the dawn.

And now unto the open door she turned  
and flung her lamp into the hall behind;  
laughing to see her former dungeon burn,  
dispersed in wisps of darkness on the wind.

She turned her back upon the blackened wood.  
The road stretched forth across the golden plains;  
to distant skies where distant mountains stood,  
and never cast her glance behind again.

## *THE TWILIGHT OF THE ELVES*

They wandered from their realms of old,  
from shining marbled citadels  
and forest deeps in golden dells  
where they had dwelt for years untold.

The clustered stars flashed on their shields,  
and on their helms the moonlight danced  
to kindle bright the blazing lance  
and lustre in their pennant's field.

And as they wandered secret ways  
they sang their lays of victory;  
of fearful foe and valiant deed  
in kingdoms lost in elder days.

To havens fair by shining seas  
they marched in their resplendent files  
and there for the enchanted isles,  
they cast their sails to catch the breeze.

Atop the vessels' foremost prow,  
their prince raised high his silver horn  
to bid farewell to lands forlorn,  
with blasts resounding high and low.

He blew his silver battle horn  
to shake the mighty mountain walls  
and echo down the distant vales,  
to break the slumber of the dawn.

And so on stealthy ships, like swans,  
they slipped in hosts of silver grey,  
like ghosts they fled upon the spray,  
to seek their fabled land beyond.

Now all the ocean's shining plane  
was shivered by the waking wind,  
as old domains fell far behind,  
and older worlds were found again.

Far, far into the West they passed,  
from whence their elder fathers came  
to leave no token of their fame,  
but name alone and legends vast.

So now their legions march no more,  
For all their ancient lore has died.  
And all the stars that were their pride  
Shall never shine on mortal shores.

## *ARRESTED*

The stirring of dust on a moonlit road  
and the glimmer of light from the crest of the rise  
and the thunder of boots on the boards of the floor.  
Then the hammer of fists splits the pane of the door.  
A fearful voice quivers and a wide pair of eyes  
feel a blow, yields a cry over dark pools of blood.

Then the dragging of feet where a fallen man stood  
and a woman imploring and clasping at heels.  
Children whimper and weep and hide under the bed  
as a rifle butt falls on the crown of his head.  
Then the slamming of doors and the screeching of wheels  
and the stirring of dust on a moonlit road.

## *PREDATOR*

He stalks downwind. The long grass spins  
as he slips with slow, stealthy tread  
towards his prey. The herd has fled,  
but for the lone straggler; half dead,  
half lame. Now the end game begins.  
Tensing his nostrils open wide,  
he sniffs the air to taste the smell  
of blood and fear. He knows it well.  
His eyes, black as the pits of Hell  
flit furtively from side to side,  
then lustre as his stare is fixed  
upon his victim. No pity stirs  
within his heart. No thought occurs  
of mercy, for now the blood lust spurs  
him on. Drooling, he licks his lips  
and steals softly forward, flexed low  
like a bow full drawn, set to strike.  
And now! now, when the time is right,  
he springs! His claws, his jaws grip tight.  
Fur flies. And then, the killer blow.  
In the death throes, he takes a wound,  
but still rips flesh from raw, red bone.  
Convulsing limbs drop dead as stone  
as he limps away, hurt, alone.  
And now his enemies draw round.

## *DERELICTION*

The bookshop was closed; closed down now for good.  
They say the owners modernised too much;  
ripped out the fine, traditional wood  
and fitted out with cheap veneers and such.

The custom had fallen away somehow.  
It had lost its atmosphere and become soulless.  
None bought or sold their thoughts there now,  
So it was bankrupt; couldn't pay old debts.

The lights were out. So through the window's  
Dull, contorted Pane, I peered. All was strange  
Inside. The fashioned glass made small works ranged  
on lower shelves seem Stupendous, although  
Other works of great moment now seemed small.  
Renowned titles warped through the listless gloom;  
Through the crooked eye of this little room  
Were to incomprehension mangled, all.

All was dim, except for the purer light  
from the theatre opposite, whose outburst  
blazed 'Oedipus' into the glass. Burning bright,  
through the gloom, but by reflection reversed.

I turned away, back to the world I knew.  
Past bins filled with classics, beloved of old,  
now outworn by use- jumbled up with new  
fangled stuff; still unread and still unsold.

Now I'd have to seek for dreams afresh;  
not in the world that literature has made,  
but in the simpler pleasures of the flesh;  
where deep feelings and deep thoughts are not betrayed.



## *HAUNTED*

I have seen you out there  
in the midst of the vale,  
where the mists hover pale  
and the branches are bare.

Then I saw you again  
by the bow of the bend,  
where the shadows blend  
in the moon's ghastly glare.

And the time just before  
when you chanced to appear,  
at the foot of the stair  
where you strutted the floor.

From the fires bright flare  
you stared straight at me,  
with such hate in your eye  
as I sat in my chair.

And you trumpet my blame  
on the wail of the wind,  
telling all of the sin  
you append to my name.

And you glare in my sleep  
pointing fingers at me,  
till I wake frantically  
or cry out in despair.

Shall I never be spared  
your disparaging taunts  
and your shadow that haunts  
all my steps everywhere?

Though I offer a prayer  
and endeavour to flee,  
you come ever to me  
through the walls of the air.

I may never be sure  
if a spirit you be,  
or some grim prodigy  
from my conscience forsworn.

But no inquisition  
could ever be worse  
than your visits accursed  
and your grim apparition.

Now I yield to the shame  
that your phantom has shown  
and admit that I own  
all the sins you proclaim.

I have wronged you, I know  
and I truly repent  
all tears that you spent  
for my sake long ago.

Be content! You have won!  
Let your spectre depart  
and then leave me to smart  
in my guilt, all alone.

Now I'll hold to my vow  
as I promised I must  
and the peace of the Just  
may you give me at last.

### *BRIGHT STAR*

When hesitation sows its baleful seed  
and grim uncertainties insinuate  
into my mind their self-destructive creed,  
making my bolder hopes seem desolate,  
you call me from your high, resplendent plane.  
And from that height to which I would aspire,  
you summon me from dismal depths again  
and bid me rise once more to seize the fire.  
My sovereign star, which heaven's heart enshrines,  
move never from your bright, exalted place.  
Your light, which every lesser light defines,  
shall guide my fevered soul to higher grace.  
Shine on, and by your acclamation's gleam  
perhaps someday I'll find my fondest dream.

### *HEN-PECKED*

With iron rod and baleful glance she rules  
my quaking heart. She tells me I'm a clod;  
some kind of fool. And I must bear her scowls,  
or worse- her physical abuse. Oh God!

For too long I have born this bitter yoke;  
scared to assert myself and take a stand.  
This time it's really gone beyond a joke!  
Now it's my turn to take the upper hand.

Enough's enough! I've taken all I can.  
But I'll soon wipe that grimace from her face;  
put down my foot and show her I'm a man;  
Then she'll know who's boss around this place....

But wait! Is that her summons from above?  
She's calling now! "I'll be right there, my love!"

### *THE DIVORCEE'S LAMENT*

She swore at me; she trashed my phone.  
She ripped my clothes 'til I had none.  
She threw my golf clubs in the ditch;  
and kicked me out without a stitch!

She took the kids in custody.  
She got the car instead of me.  
She took the household clean away.  
She even got my future pay.

And now she's moved some fellow in.  
He drives my car. He drinks my gin.  
He puts to bed my kith and kin.  
And all because of one small sin.

I didn't murder anyone.  
I didn't violate a nun.  
I didn't burn a building down  
or plot to overthrow the Crown.

What crime did I commit for this?  
From someone else I stole a kiss.  
Now I must pay my wife's brief tears  
with the sweat and toil of twenty years.

## *THE FIRST DAY*

These shoes are tight! This blazer's small!  
This uniform won't do at all!  
I think I'd rather run away  
than go to school on my first day.

The other kids will all make fun!  
I think I'll just stay here with Mum.  
I'll stop at home now, if I may;  
report in sick on my first day.

My hair's a mess-I look a Burke!  
I'll never understand the work.  
What's that? It's nearly nine you say?  
Now I'll be late on my first day!

And now the gate is looming near.  
I think I'll really hate it here;  
I won't know what to do or say.  
I'm terrified of my first day.

But who's that there? A friendly face!  
Some welcome smiles about the place!  
Someone to help me on my way  
and show me around on my first day.

I've made new friends. We'll all be mates!  
There's lots to do. The lunch is great!  
Now perhaps I'd rather stay.  
It's really nice on my first day.

## *LIFE'S A BITCH*

At birth we get a smack that lingers,  
then measles, mumps and nappy rash,  
Our learning is through burning fingers,  
falling over, knees that gash.

And then the teens; a time of passion  
when you reach your sexual peak.,  
But isn't it always just the fashion!  
You get braces, acne what a freak!

And all the Jocks, they get the cream  
of all the chicks - or so you heard,  
But you could never make the team;  
they said that you were just a nerd.

Then marriage and the nagging spouse.  
The unpaid bills drive you to tears.  
Endless jobs around the house  
and solid graft for fifty years.

The kids move on and you have cause  
to get a rest, you and the wife.  
But now you get male menopause  
and she goes through the change of life.

After this you're in the clear,  
but pretty soon your mum and dad,  
now entering their golden years,  
by slow degrees go raving mad.

And now your golden years have come;  
you smell, you ramble and you snore!,  
Your kids just dump you in a home,  
'Cause you can't hack it anymore.

The one clear gain from all this strife  
is wisdom stored within your head.  
But just as you get the hang of life  
your number's up; you drop down dead!

So as you see, life's not much fun.  
I'll tell you now the reason why:  
When after all is said and done  
Life is a bitch and then you die!

## *THE ESSEX MAN*

'Hi Dave! How are you? Haven't seen you in years!  
Still doing the horses and swilling the beers?  
You're doing quite well if appearance tells ought!  
Is that a Mercedes you've just been and bought?  
You must be the head of some large company!  
'No nuffint' like that- I'm on social' said he.

'But you've chains round your neck worth a fortune I'd guess,  
And sovereigns galore; and a suit of the best.  
And what's that ? You've been on a cruise in the Med'?  
And acquired a semi with four double beds?  
Whilst I'm in a terrace and drive a Capri!  
'That's 'cos yer don't fiddle' he giggled with glee.

'And is that a Rolex you have on your wrist?  
And that tie from the Golf Club! I'm really impressed!  
Especially since you were expelled from our school,  
And spent time inside and then went on the dole  
How on Earth did you come by such finery?'  
'Say nuffint' he said, it's a bit iffy 'see!'

'Stop kidding! I bet you did night school like me  
And worked your way up the professional; tree  
I have to pay tax at exorbitant rates,  
(But can't get support when I need from the state).  
Too rich to exempt but to poor to slip free.'  
'Nar-find a loophole and yer don't pay none, see?'

'You mean all my strivings and struggles are vain?  
Whatever I earn they take from me again,  
And give it to you just for breaking the rules!  
You can't read and write, but it's me that's the fool!  
There must be a way out of this lunacy!'  
'Yeah. Down at the breakers' yard - workin' for me!'



## *DIVINE COMEDY*

Within a room atop their ivory tower,  
in conference sat some eminent divines,  
who's business was to while away the hour,  
in judgement of the writers of their times.

Before them lay the poetry of one,  
who's been a master of the elder days;  
long dead and by this pseudonym unknown,  
now offered for the sanction of their praise.

So with no more ado or long delay,  
the chairman Mr. A was first to speak;  
"My friends peruse these verses if you may,  
to rank them is the matter of the week"

They duly read and very soon agreed;  
"What we have here is rather paltry verse  
the structured form is very clear indeed.  
It rhymes as well! Whatever could be worse!"

"And look! He plumbs the chasms of his soul,  
and paints a picture of the human state;  
with metaphor he surely makes too bold!  
To such as this we really can't relate".

Then up piped Mrs. B and said "Worse yet!  
His intimations state the rights of all,  
but he's not quite politically correct  
We cannot go to print with such a call!"

"But wait! Here's one of murder and foul deeds.  
This juicy stuff is just the thing we use!  
Ah no! He writes with tender sympathies.  
There's no incest here, nor even child abuse!"

"What is this chap? Some kind of anarchist?  
He's even tried to give his verses meaning!  
Does he not know that's strictly off the list?  
As well as any philosophic leaning".

"Such stuff did very well once in its day".  
Said Mr. C, who found at last his voice.  
"For Shakespeare, Keats and Shelly, such as they  
for centuries were every reader's choice".

"But who were they compared with such as we  
who have outstripped their old poetic powers?  
What a pity that the public don't agree!  
and still persists in reading theirs not ours".

Said Mr. A, "I see the thing's decided!  
There is no need for any more debate.  
We've read his verse and really can't abide it  
If he's outside then show him to the gate!".

Then with a sigh he opened wide the casement,  
and flung the sheets outside into the air.  
And having made quite sure of this debasement,  
he moved on to debate the next affair.

Below, there sat a man whose heart was broken  
and by his side a sonnet came to rest.  
He found therein the grief he had not spoken  
and heartened, thrust the page into his breast.

## *SKIVING*

Outside the winter's gloomy pall  
casts dismal shadows over all  
and hard against my window pane  
driving wind and lashing rain  
make icy cascades fall.

No time is this to serve in thrall  
to labours long and pleasures small;  
the world can wait another day  
for me to go and pay my way.  
So now I'll shrink from duty's call.

In soporific bliss I'll lay  
and while away the idle day;  
watching flames upon the fire  
and dreaming dreams of fond desire,  
engendered by my fancy's play.

And there, before the glowing brands  
I'll laze with warming draft in hands  
and tread the paths of airy cloud  
that leads to slumber's cryptic shroud  
and so beyond to shapeless lands.

But when sleep's ministration wane,  
I'll waken to the airy strain  
of soothing melodies sublime  
and rouse myself in easy time  
to drowsy consciousness again.

Yet sweet repose, will linger on  
until the eager hours are drawn  
and then I'll struggle back to bed,  
press pillows to my weary head,  
and drift into another dawn.

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